

Victorian Studies Association of Ontario



September 2010

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The President's Message

In one of my classes I am currently teaching Dickens's *Bleak House*. It seems that on every other page of this very long novel it is raining; the rain is either mentioned in passing or slowly relished and almost savoured by the narrator. The "drip, drip, drip" of the rain at Chesney Wold, for example, is described in lavish detail. Here in Ottawa it feels as if the weather is reflecting this novel we're immersed in; there is relentless rain and very little of the colour, warmth, and brilliance one typically associates with Fall. Happily, events at VSAO offer a sharp contrast to our monotone weather palate! We have many things planned both for this Fall and for the year ahead: Evening Lectures, our joint VSAO-ACCUTE panel, our Spring conference, and ongoing changes to our website.

There will be two Evening Lectures this Fall. The first talk, Juergen Kramer's "Not Warrior, but Worrier Ghost: A Reading of Henry James's 'Sir Edmund Orme,'" will be in Toronto on 18 November. The second talk, Sukeshi Kamra's "Arresting Publics: Law and the Periodical Press in India, 1857-1910," will be in Ottawa on 2 December. And Susan Brown, Lauren Gillingham, and Alison Syme will be presenting Evening Lectures in Winter 2011. Please see below for details.

This Newsletter also has information on two Calls for Papers: the joint VSAO-ACCUTE panel, "The Tides that Bind: Exploring the Victorian Coast," and the morning panel for our Annual Conference. The theme for our 44th Annual Spring Conference this year is "Manipulation: Victorian Variations on Hands, Handling, and Underhanded Behaviour." Our keynote speakers, James Eli Adams and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, already illustrate two very

different approaches to this topic and we will look forward to hearing your response to what promises to be a lively and productive conference. Details and deadlines for both Calls for Papers are below.

Our website remains a work in progress. This winter we hope to add links to related blogs and lists of upcoming conferences and talks in addition to our regular content. We welcome suggestions of any sort.

I am very much indebted to all the members of the executive for their ongoing and energetic contributions to every facet of our activities. I'm fortunate to be working with such skilled colleagues. This Fall I owe a large debt to David Latham, in particular, who heroically took on the production of this Newsletter at the last minute.

Next week my class turns to Middlemarch and I'll hope our shift away from Bleak House will also turn the page on this rain! Wishing you all a productive, stimulating, and bright year ahead.

All the best,
Barbara

Evening Lectures 2010-2011

1. Thursday, 18 November 2010, 7:30 pm
Room 211 Victoria College, University of Toronto:

Jürgen Kramer (Dortmund), "Not a warrior, but a Worrier Ghost: A Reading of Henry James's 'Sir Edmund Orme'"

Abstract: In the first half of my paper I should like to make a few general remarks on the nature and the history of the ghost story with particular emphasis on the late 19th century. In this context I shall try to explain the historical shift from what I should like to call "warrior ghosts" to "worrier ghosts." The first part will be rounded off by a brief reflection on why the Victorians were (and perhaps we still are) fascinated by ghost stories. In the second half I shall attempt a close and critical reading of James's text in which an exemplary worrier ghost is represented in action. I should like to argue that this tale deserves more attention than it has had so far: some of the rather unimaginative readings which exist I shall comment on and deconstruct.

2. Thursday, 2 December 2010, 7:30 pm
Seminar Room, ICSLAC, St. Pat's, Carleton University, Ottawa:

Sukeshi Kamra (Carleton), "Arresting Publics: Law and the Periodical Press in India, 1857-1910"

Abstract: The book manuscript, whose argument I would like to present, makes a case for considering the Indian periodical press as a key forum for the production, circulation, and

sedimentation of nationalist discourse. It argues that between the 1870s and 1910, the press was the place in which the very notion of ‘the public’ circulated and where an expansive middle class, and even larger reading audience, was persuaded into believing it had force. ‘Public’ was an enabling fiction, one which helped transform a post-1857 sense of despair into hope: it allowed for the belief that there was some space, of political culture, outside of the control of the colonial government. The reality, of course, was that there was no such space as the proliferation of laws for controlling the press, and print culture in general, was to make abundantly clear. However, law proved to be much less effective than government hoped and imagined. If anything, law, and its use, was the proverbial fillip to a developing political public sphere—one that was secured by the Indian press. In the early days, the press slyly noted that government monitoring was evidence of the threat a politicized public posed to colonial rule. By 1907, the press was ready to engage in a full onslaught, describing law openly as the state’s emissary (as Ranajit Guha has described it). Stepping back, we can see that starting as a culture that couched dissent as complaint and ending as a key forum of nationalism, by 1910 the press lays claim on behalf of the Indian public to the privileged space of counter-discursivity; and over the same time period, the government makes legal moves that enable a legal recognition of periodical texts as only, and dangerously, irrational; in a word, such texts emerge as “seditious propagandism.” The story of the production of a political counter public sphere, that was in competition with its elite counterpart, is thus also the story of an increasingly hostile press-government relationship in which law plays a crucial role.

This vexed narrative the book relates by examining some key historical moments—1857 and its production of a more than usually prevaricatory discourse of loyalty; the 1870s: a decade which marks the emergence of the discourse of the public and also the erosion of the root discourse of imperialism—civilizational superiority—as well as the insertion of seditious libel law into the Indian Penal Code (an act that determines the future direction of press-government relationship); 1891: the year in which government and press engage in the courtroom; 1907-1910: years in which a ‘movement’ takes root and in which the legal battle between the government and the press turns into a routine function.

3. Thursday, 27 January 2011, 7:30 pm, University of Ottawa:

Lauren Gillingham (Ottawa), An Evening Lecture on the topic of history, temporality, and fashion in the sensation novel.

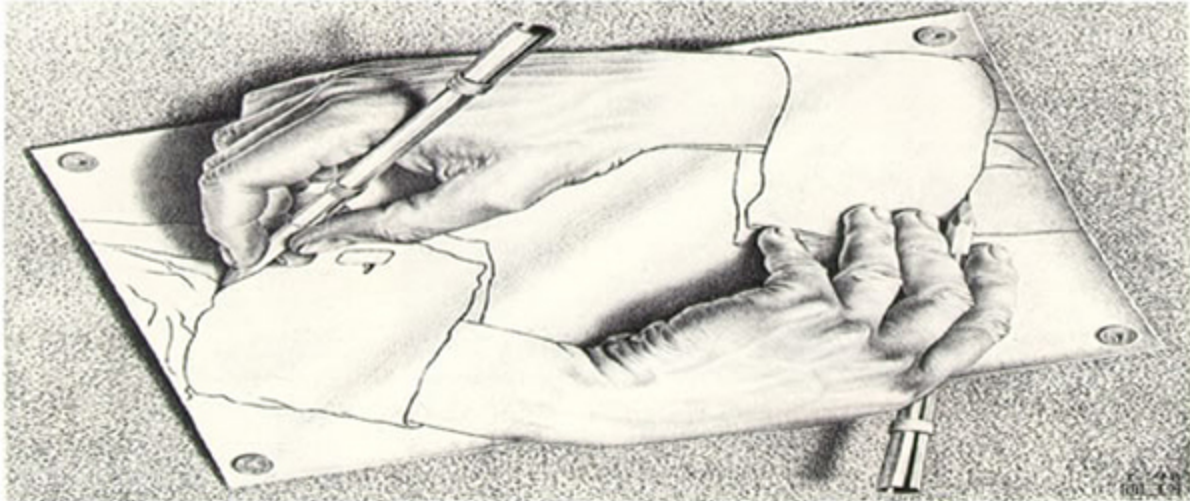
4. Thursday, 3 February 2011, 7:30 pm, 211 Victoria College, University of Toronto:

Susan Brown (Guelph), “The Agency of the Letter: Mary Barton and Text Technologies.”

5. Thursday, 3 March 2011, 7:30 pm, 211 Victoria College, University of Toronto:

Alison Syme (Toronto), Details about Art History topic will be circulated soon.

Forthcoming Conference: VSAO 44th Annual Spring Conference



MANIPULATION:

VICTORIAN VARIATIONS on HANDS, HANDLING, and UNDERHANDED BEHAVIOUR

30 April 2010, Glendon Campus, York University

The Victorian Studies Association of Ontario will hold its 44th annual conference at the beautiful Glendon Campus of York University, Toronto, on Saturday, 30 April 2010. This one-day event includes a panel of three speakers in the morning, followed by lunch, two plenary speakers, and a reception in the afternoon.

Plenary Speakers:

James Eli Adams

Columbia University

“The Dead Hand: George Eliot and the Uses of Inheritance”

Lorraine Janzen Kooistra

Ryerson University

“The Dyer’s Hand and What it Works in: Laurence Housman and the Book Arts”

For the morning panel of three speakers, please see the Call for Papers section below.

Calls for Papers

for the VSAO annual conference (due 28 January 2011)

and for the annual Congress conference (due 20 November 2010)

CFP: VSAO 44th Annual Conference

In keeping with the conference theme, *Manipulation: Victorian Variations on Hands, Handling, and Underhanded Behaviour*, the VSAO executive invites abstracts for papers to be presented at our morning panel. Please send electronic copies of proposals (300-500 words) and a brief biographical statement to Barbara Leckie (barbara_leckie@carleton.ca) by **28 January 2011**. Alternatively, hard copies can be sent by mail to Barbara Leckie / Department of English / Carleton University / 1125 Colonel By Drive / Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 (or IUTS).

Call for Papers: We are seeking papers that explore Victorian variations on manipulation, hands, and handling. In what ways did manipulation resonate in the Victorian period? In what ways did hands resonate in the Victorian period? Papers may focus on any of the following topics on their own or in combination: literal hands (working, drawing, writing, growing things, playing music); tricks of the hand (magic, shadow theatre); handicrafts (arts and crafts, textiles, pottery); the etiquette of the hand (handshakes, greetings, gloves, rings); hidden hands (masturbation, strangulation, prosthetics, “the dead hand”); gendered hands (fighting, being brought up by hand); reading the hand (fortune telling, class, signing); manipulating hands (“by another’s hand,” “having a hand in,” “bad hands”); economics and the hand (industrialization and “hands,” work by hand, injuries to the hand); handwriting (forgery, deceit, shorthand); etc. We welcome papers on any dimension of the hand, handling, and/or manipulation in the Victorian period.

CFP: 2011 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences

Joint Session for VSAO/ACCUTE
at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences
May 2011 University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University

CALL FOR PAPERS: Victorian Studies Association of Ontario panel
Organizers: Constance Crompton (York University/Ryerson University) and Fiona Coll (University of Toronto)

The Tide that Binds: Exploring the Victorian Coast

O did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curled white of the coming wave
Glassed in the slippery sand before it
breaks?
Tennyson

—

Victorians flocked to coasts and shorelines to seek leisure, employment, escape, beauty, death, and the natural world, amongst other pursuits. For Great Britain, an island nation at the centre of an expanding empire, the relationship between natural edge and national border took on increasingly complex resonances as the nineteenth century progressed. This session seeks to explore the investments made by Victorians in coasts both symbolic and literal, including the various aesthetic, industrial, gendered, classed, patriotic, and religious meanings that inhered in representations of the line between land and sea. The Victorian

Studies Association of Ontario invites proposals that explore the coast as boundary, resource, destination, or site of scientific intervention.

Papers may focus on, but need not be limited to, bathing apparatuses and costumes; childhood and the sea-shore; coastal leisure and tourism; emigration and immigration; fisheries; fossil collecting and scientific exploration; geographies of belonging; hulks and wrecks; maritime and naval exercises; ports, piers, and harbours; seaside mining; shipbuilding; shivering sands and troubled waters; treasure islands and shore adventures; the burden of the land-locked.

Following the instructions on the ACCUTE website (under Conference) for joint association sessions, send your 700-word proposal (or 8-10 page double-spaced paper), a 100-word abstract, a 50-word biographical statement, and the submitter information form, to VSAOatACCUTE@gmail.com by November 20th.

Note: You must be a VSAO member or a current ACCUTE member to submit to this session.

Summary of the VSAO/ACCUTE Panel at the 2010 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences

The 2010 Congress at Concordia University boasted 28 Victorianist panels this year, including the VSAO's "Victorian Systems and Standardization." The VSAO's call for papers garnered submissions from across the country. After considering the abstracts, the vetting committee selected three papers that explored the role of systematic and standardized forms of writing in the production of Victorian subjects.

At the Congress our three panelists, Gregory Brophy (Western Ontario), Robin Durnford (Mount St. Vincent), and Janice Schroeder (Carleton), were well received by an attentive audience.

Gregory Brophy's paper, "Graphomania and the Graphical Method" demonstrated that compulsive writing was only one symptom of the burgeoning Victorian graphicological economy. Not only did the Victorians consume the confessions of psychiatric patients and irate letters to the editor, they also attended to the output of automatic writing machines. These machines, which recorded light, sound and electrical current, materialized the Victorians' assumption that the natural world was waiting to be recorded.

Robin Durnford sustained the theme of systematic scientific writing with her paper, "Galton's Computer: A Standard for Immortality in an Odd Victorian Text." Taking Francis Galton's Anthropometric Pavilion as her text, Dr. Durnford traced the Victorian desire to reduce the body to manageable data in the service of what Galton and Grant Allen called "rational reproduction."

Janice Schroeder concluded the panel with "Typical Deviants: School Systems and Schooled Subjects." Contrasting the schoolroom narratives in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* with those in

Mary Carpenter's educational reform treatises, Dr. Schroeder traced the "educational imaginary" across boundaries of class and genre.

The VSAO will host another joint panel, "The Tide that Binds: Exploring the Victorian Coast," at next year's ACCUTE conference in Fredericton. We hope to enjoy as engaging a panel at ACCUTE in 2011 as we did this year.

Constance Crompton